

PRESS RELEASE

January 19, 2017

ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS PASS CLEAN JOBS INITIATIVE

COMBATING HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, ESTABLISHING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES, AND INCREASING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



(Newark, NJ) – On January 16, 2017, the country celebrated the life of Civil Rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who fought for not only racial equality, but also economic equality and jobs in what was known as the “Poor People’s Campaign.” During this same week, the Essex County Clean Jobs Initiative, sponsored by Freeholder President Britnee N. Timberlake of East Orange, New Jersey, was unanimously passed during the Board of Chosen Freeholders’ meeting on Wednesday, January 18, 2017.

The ordinance, is an innovative piece of legislation created to lower the unemployment rate and establish healthier communities while attracting large companies to relocate to Essex and build on remediated, vacant, and abandoned lots to bring more job opportunities to the County, a goal much similar to Dr. King’s vision.

The Clean Jobs Initiative establishes both job training and job placement for Essex County’s unemployed and underemployed residents. Before being placed on worksites, residents will be trained in how to clean up brownfields and abate lead and asbestos, a highly specialized and very lucrative trade.

Furthermore, the County will require any company responding to a bid opportunity seeking to remediate contamination to use a workforce consisting of a minimum of 90% of graduates from the Essex County Clean Jobs Training Programs to perform the solicited work. An outreach program will also be established to assist municipalities with procurement and to encourage responders of city and township bids to do the same.

President Timberlake shared her enthusiasm in the passing of this ordinance, a product of two years’ worth of research, drafts, and relationship building. She stated, “The passing of this legislation is just the beginning. True success will be measured by how, we, Essex County, implement it and how many people can be gainfully employed or venture into entrepreneurship because of this law.”

The program is expected to be a collaborative effort with Veterans’ organizations, nonprofits, educational institutions, the County’s One-Stop Career Center, Prison Re-entry, labor trade unions, environmentalist, and brownfield/lead/asbestos remediation professionals. The President thanked Ironbound Community Corporation and Stephen Kehayes (Senior Manager of JM Sorge, Inc., Environmental Consulting), for volunteering their time and professional advice throughout her creation process; she also thanked the entire board for their unanimous vote, Freeholder Counsel Michael Parlavecchio, and the Administration of Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo, Jr., for their support and commitment to seeing this initiative succeed.

As of 2016, Essex County’s unemployment rate was 5.6% compared to the State of New Jersey’s rate of 4.4% and a national rate of 5.0%. Currently, the County is in development stages of implementing this legislation. Please continue to check the Freeholder website for updates about how you or someone you know can enroll in the program.

For Additional Information:

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